



**DENTON CARGO: AN ANALYSIS OF INTERAGENCY INTERACTION**

**GRADUATE RESEARCH PAPER**

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AFIT/IMO/ENS/09-05

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GRADUATE RESEARCH PAPER

Presented to the Faculty

Department of Operational Sciences

Graduate School of Engineering and Management

Air Force Institute of Technology

Air University

Air Education and Training Command

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the

Degree of Master of Logistics

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June 2009

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### **Abstract**

The purpose of this research was to identify how the Denton Program for delivery of privately donated humanitarian assistance could be more responsive to the requirements of U.S. Southern Command. Specifically this graduate research project sought to determine how the Denton Program is currently executed and which organizations are involved, the barriers to responsive execution of the program and how those barriers could be removed.

The research questions were answered through the case study methodology focusing on one example of privately donated humanitarian assistance involving Haiti during the 2008 hurricane season. The primary source of information used to answer the research questions came from interviews with personnel who are experts in the process and are also currently directly involved in the process.

The research revealed that the Denton Process is tightly tied to the Denton Amendment to Title 10 of the United States Code. Because it is governed by federal law, there is significant inflexibility to its execution. The research question was in a sense the wrong question. Rather than making the program more responsive, the more appropriate issue is one of making the program more efficient and effective. Recommendations include waivers or standing execution orders for U.S. Southern Command, realigning resources within the affected agencies to better execute the program, and improving interagency communication at the lowest levels.

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# DENTON CARGO: AN ANALYSIS OF INTERAGENCY INTERACTION

## **I. Introduction**

### **Background, Motivation, & Problem Statement**

The events of September 11, 2001 forced the U.S. government to accept a new way of looking at warfare. At the time of this writing it is too early to know the extent to which President Obama's National Security Strategy will be similar to President Bush's. However, since 2001 national security organizations have increasingly come to realize the power of a whole-of-government approach to national security, and, perhaps even a "whole-of-society" approach. Irregular warfare and interagency unity of action have marched to the forefront of our approach to defense.

One outgrowth of our realization of new and different threats in the world is the forming of Joint Interagency Coordination Groups at combatant command headquarters. These organizations "operationalize" a whole-of-government approach to tackling national security issues with representatives of various government agencies sitting on the combatant commander's staff. At U.S. Southern Command this includes a representative from the United States Agency for International Development. This presents the combatant commander with interesting opportunities to leverage the core competencies of the U.S. Agency for International Development in the overall effort to influence and shape South America positively for United States national security.

One of many programs the Agency for International Development is responsible for (in partnership with the Department of Defense) is the Denton Program. This program allows private U.S. citizens and organizations to use opportune space on military aircraft

to transport humanitarian goods. The American public in general and immigration communities from South America, in particular, can be very generous in times of humanitarian hardship. U.S. Southern Command's leverage of the Denton Program provides great opportunity to quickly provide goodwill to those countries in need of humanitarian assistance.

Early in the research process there were several discussions with logistics personnel at U.S. Southern Command that indicated that the perception of the Denton Program was that it was not responsive. This research examines if this is, in fact, true, why, and what, if anything, can be done to improve the process. The problem statement for this research is that the Denton program, as it is executed, is not responsive enough to meet the needs of U.S. Southern Command.

### **Research Objectives/Research Questions & Hypotheses**

The focus of this research is an examination of the process for approving/validating and moving privately donated humanitarian aid via the Denton Program for cargo destined for the U.S. Southern Command area of focus. The problem statement, or hypothesis, is that the Denton process is not responsive because of differences of organizational priority, organizational resources and even an incompatibility between the processes of Agency for International Development and U.S. Southern Command. This was formulated early on in the research process after preliminary discussions with U. S. Southern Command logistics staff and some brief, preliminary review of the literature.

What was obvious in these initial discussions with U.S. Southern Command is that the command has a strong desire to use humanitarian assistance to build relationships and the Denton process, as is, is not always as responsive as they would like.

In order to explore the problem statement for this research several research questions will be examined: 1) how is the Denton Program executed to move cargo donated by U.S. Private Voluntary Organizations? 2) what government organizations and who within those organizations are involved in validating Denton cargo for movement by the Department of Defense, and the Air Force in particular? 3) what barriers with existing rules and structure could cause the Denton Program to not be responsive to U.S. Southern Command combatant commander requirements? And finally, 4) how could the Denton Program be more responsive to humanitarian aid requirements in the U.S. Southern Command area of focus?

These questions form the foundation of interview questions to be asked of Denton Program subject matter experts. The available literature addresses some of the issues that the research questions touch on. However, the available literature on this process is fairly limited which in turn drives an interview-based research method.

### **Assumptions/Limitations**

As with all research, the resources and time available to the project do not lend themselves toward a fully comprehensive examination of the topic. Therefore some assumptions were made along with acknowledgment of some limitations, in order to narrow the scope of research. The following are the assumptions:

A1: The Denton Program is ideal for quick execution of the U.S. Southern Command strategy of engaging nations in South America in order to meet humanitarian aid needs and to build relationships and influence populations in accordance with national security objectives.

A2: Identification of the subject matter experts is thorough enough to provide accurate answers to the research questions. Additionally the experts are honest in their assessment of the Denton Program.

A3: The goals and motivations of the United States Agency for International Development are aligned with the goals and motivations of the Department of Defense under the auspices of the entire national security strategy.

A4: President Obama will continue the foreign policy of the Bush administration with regard to the importance of the Western Hemisphere and the role of foreign assistance and cooperation with nongovernmental organizations.

In addition to the aforementioned assumptions, there are several limitations to this study; they are as follows:

L1: The Denton Program will only be examined from the view of one combatant command, U.S. Southern Command.

L2: The method of searching out and interviewing a small number of subject matter experts on the Denton Process was more prudent than attempting a comprehensive survey of everyone that is involved with the process.

L3: The case study methodology was used with only one case. This is limited data and can lead to erroneous conclusions.

L4: There exists possible bias in the responses of interview subjects. The experts in the Denton Process were chosen primarily by referral. These were interview subjects that were already interested in various aspects of the subject matter and were not, therefore, randomly chosen.

## **Implications**

In early discussions with the U.S. Southern Command logistics staff, it was readily apparent that there was some dissatisfaction with the Denton Process. Given that this is an inherently interagency process, it was first suspected that the source of dissatisfaction or conflict was that there exist different expectations or disparate understandings of the program in question.

This research began with the underlying assumption that a better understanding of the process, organizational factors, or any other barriers for that matter, would lead to identification of the root cause of any problems with the effectiveness of the program.

Finding the root cause of the ineffectiveness of the Denton cargo process hopefully will assist policy makers, military leadership, and State Department leadership find ways to streamline the Denton Process. A quicker response to humanitarian assistance situations is consistent with United States national security objectives.

Finally, this research will add to existing literature on the interagency process. Much has been written on the process from a strategic perspective, for example National Security Council interactions, relationships between the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of State, synchronization of national power etc. Some literature exists on the operational level of interagency interaction including planning and Joint Interagency

Control Groups at the combatant commands. But there is little to no dialogue of the tactical level interactions and daily execution barriers among the executive agencies of the federal government.

## **II. Literature Review**

The literature review is broken up into four distinct areas. Section 1 is a review of national level strategic guidance. The National Security Strategy outlines the major national security concerns of the President. This high level strategy touches on some areas that relate to the use of the Denton Process for moving privately donated cargo. Section 2 continues the higher level look at strategy with a review of the various agencies' strategy, the National Defense Strategy, the State Department Strategic Plan, and the U.S. Southern Command strategy. Included in this section is also a review of irregular warfare and its role in defense strategy. Section 3 narrows the focus a little bit from the strategic to the operational with a review of doctrinal publications that discuss interaction among executive agencies (interagency). This section begins to explain how the United States synchronizes all instruments of power to maintain or increase national security. In section 4 available literature on the Denton Process is discussed. Literature on this process is fairly limited to official documents, references in Department of Defense publications and some operating procedures. Very little could be found in the form of books or articles. Finally, section 5 will discuss available literature on a humanitarian aid situation that occurred in the U.S. Southern Command Area of Focus.

### **Section 1: Strategic Vision**

On 16 March 2006, President George W. Bush published the National Security Strategy of the United States of America. The purpose of this document is to identify broad reaching security concerns for the nation and to provide overarching vision and direction for supporting organizations. Although George W. Bush is no longer president, this

document continues to provide direction until a new National Security Strategy is published by President Barack Obama. Beginning with this document was important as the research sought to align the Denton Cargo Program with its proper place in the much broader vision set by President Obama.

There are several references within the National Security Strategy that build the case that humanitarian assistance is important to overall national security. Shaping the world for U.S. national security rather than simply reacting to events is addressed.

We seek to shape the world, not merely be shaped by it; to influence events for the better instead of being at their mercy...[our strength] rests on strong alliances, friendships, and international institutions, which enable us to promote freedom, prosperity, and peace in common purpose with others.  
(White House, 2006: opening letter)

Later, an entire section of the document is devoted to the idea of providing humanitarian assistance to build the “infrastructure of democracy.”

In the cause of ending tyranny and promoting effective democracy, we will employ the full array of political, economic, diplomatic, and other tools at our disposal, including: Forming creative partnerships with nongovernmental organizations and other civil society voices to support and reinforce their work (White House, 2006:6)

Taken together in the context of the document, President Bush laid out a strategy of using our instruments of national power to shape the world, but also partnering with private citizens, where appropriate, to harness as many resources as possible towards the end of national security. The National Security Strategy makes the case that national security does not only involve the Department of Defense.

## **Section 2: Executive Department Vision**

Next, the research examined the most current documents containing the vision and overarching strategy of the executive agencies involved in the Denton Process. There are



several relevant documents produced by the Department of Defense, including the National Defense Strategy, the U.S. Southern Command Strategy, and the Irregular Warfare Joint Operating Concept. The State Department also has its own strategic plan.

The National Defense Strategy of June 2008 is best described in the following excerpt from the document:

It flows from the NSS and informs the National Military Strategy. It also provides a framework for other DoD strategic guidance, specifically on campaign and contingency planning, force development, and intelligence. It reflects the results of the 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) and lessons learned from on-going operations in Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere. It addresses how the U.S. Armed Forces will fight and win America's wars and how we seek to work with and through partner nations to shape opportunities in the international environment to enhance security and avert conflict (Department of Defense, 2008:1)

Among the spectrum of challenges addressed in the introduction to the document is an acknowledgement of natural disasters and the role the Department of Defense plays in responding to these challenges. Responding to natural disasters or humanitarian assistance events is seen as a role for the Department of Defense. The Department of Defense obviously brings tremendous resources and logistics expertise that are in demand during humanitarian assistance events, however these events are not viewed as unilateral military events. The strategy is seen as shared with other government agencies and even international partners. Success depends on the integration of these instruments. (Department of Defense, 2008:1)

Later the strategy emphasizes cooperative relationships, alliances, and partnerships. The events and aftermath of the events of September 11, 2001 have resulted in many changes in the United States approach to national security threats. Significant among them is the emphasis on cooperation with other government agencies and even other parts

of society, often referred to as a whole-of-government or whole-of-society approach. President Bush's national security strategy makes special emphasis of integrating, tailoring, and applying these national power capabilities in order to tap the "full strength of America and its people. (Bush, 2006:17) This is consistent with the Denton Program's use of privately donated humanitarian assistance material being flown on military aircraft. Finally the document makes reference to the importance of quick reaction to events, whether humanitarian assistance events or otherwise. (Department of Defense, 2008:18)

U.S. Southern Command's foundation for achieving its role in taking on national security challenges are laid out in United States Southern Command Strategy 2018 which was published in November of 2008. It is a document that flows logically from both the National Security Strategy and the National Defense Strategy with a focus on particular challenges faced in the western hemisphere.

From the beginning, in Admiral Stavridis' opening letter to the document, references are made to partnership with other nations, security and stability and, in particular, an emphasis on interagency orientation.

The U.S. Southern Command assessment of the western hemisphere is that the potential of force-on-force military operations between two nations is relatively low. Therefore, U.S. Southern Command's focus is on threats to security and stability, such as terrorism, illegal drugs, and natural disasters. All this is discussed within the context of the fact that all nations in the hemisphere are linked and what is bad for one can spill over into another, including the United States.

Challenges such as these do not always respond to a traditional military approach, but rather the use of all instruments of national power, even those outside of the government and in the private sector. Under the section titled “Guidance/Goals/Objectives/Concepts” programs such as the Denton Process are touched on with specific reference to interagency efforts supporting nongovernmental and private organization partnerships in order to provide humanitarian assistance. (U.S. Southern Command, 2008:13)

Having established that the Department of Defense vision is in harmony with the National Security Strategy, the logical follow-on question is whether or not other relevant executive agencies are also aligned in their vision. The State Department Strategic Plan, Fiscal Years 2007-2012, was published in May, 2007. This plan addresses both the State Department and the U.S. Agency for International Development. As a joint strategic plan it defines the primary aims of United States foreign policy and development assistance as well as strategic priorities within each for the coming years.

Much of the State Department Strategic Plan focuses on humanitarian assistance and its relationship to national security. Humanitarian assistance takes a prominent part in the overall State Department strategy as one of seven strategic goals for the department. The strategy points out that all countries face some risk of humanitarian emergency. The role of humanitarian assistance is to respond to each country’s particular needs and give them a path toward “recovery, growth, and stability.” (U.S. State Department, 2007:30)

A nation’s ability to build and sustain a democratic and well-governed state that responds to the needs of its citizens is diminished or absent when affected by conflict or natural disaster. Conflicts, disasters, and human rights abuses threaten people’s lives and health, displace people, divide families, destabilize societies, and erode living standards. All countries face some risk of humanitarian emergency. Humanitarian assistance responds to their needs, and transforms affected countries by forging a path toward recovery, growth, and stability. (U.S. State Department, 2007:30)

Additionally, and important to this research, was a short statement subsequent to the discussion of humanitarian assistance: “Without exception, flexibility to respond quickly is critical.” (U.S. State Department, 2007:30)

This review of executive agency strategy and vision documents makes the case that flexible, interagency response to humanitarian assistance situations is important to the national security of the United States.

### **Section 3: Doctrine and Military Instructions**

Joint Publication 1-02 defines doctrine as the “fundamental principles by which the military forces or elements thereof guide their actions in support of national objectives. It is authoritative but requires judgment in application.” No investigation into any military issue is complete without a review of relevant doctrine. Instructions and directives are also a good source of procedural information and the rules by which the military conducts business, with some of these rules being rooted in executive agency execution of congressional law.

Three doctrinal publications were relevant to the interagency application of national power and humanitarian assistance. The first is Joint Publication 3-08 Volume I, Interagency, Intergovernmental Organization and Nongovernmental Organization Coordination during Joint Operations. The publication begins with a good working definition of interagency coordination and then emphasizes the importance integrating United States political and military objectives. The more complicated and challenging the world environment is, the more our efforts require greater cooperation. Again, interagency cooperation is referenced in the following excerpt:

Attaining our national objectives requires the efficient and effective use of the diplomatic, informational, military, and economic instruments of national power supported by and coordinated with that of our allies and various intergovernmental, nongovernmental, and regional security organizations. (Department of Defense, 2006:I-1)

This essential coordination provides the critical link between the various instruments of national power. The separate instruments are indeed, effective in their own right, but much more effective when coordinated and used together.

Later the same publication introduces the Joint Interagency Coordination Group and its role on the combatant commander's staff. Although created for a military combatant command staff, the Joint Interagency Coordination Group is a significant step in coordinating the national instruments of power by facilitating working relationships between civilian agency and military operational planners. It provides the combatant commander an effective tool to collaborate at the operational level of planning with other government agencies and departments. A good example relevant to this research is the fact that there is a United States Agency for International Development representative at U.S. Southern Command headquarters in Miami, FL. This representative, as well as others from other government agencies, provide a critical link back to those various agencies and help synchronize joint task force operations with the efforts of civilian government agencies and departments.

Finally, Joint Publication 3-08 Volume I emphasizes that the combatant commander and their staff should always be engaged with not only other government agencies, but also appropriate non-governmental and/or private voluntary organizations by establishing working relationships long before crisis action planning and military resources are required.

Joint Publication 3-08, Volume II continues the discussion of interagency issues with a description of key U.S. Government agencies and their organizational structures and relationship to the Department of Defense. Of particular interest to this research was an extensive description of the United States Agency for International Development. This includes description of their role and responsibility as an agency, as well as some individual roles and responsibilities within the agency.

Focusing the literature search a little more on particular military doctrine concerning humanitarian assistance led to Joint Publication 3-07.6, Joint Tactics Techniques and Procedures For Foreign Humanitarian Assistance. As well as providing some overlap on roles and responsibilities with Joint Publication 3-08, it details several programs available through the U.S. Government, including the Denton Program, which allows for military transport of privately donated humanitarian cargo.

Joint Publication 3-07.6 also includes good discussions of interagency coordination, and the various elements of planning and execution from a Department of Defense perspective.

One of the most important issues that arose during the literature review portion of the research was what the Department of Defense and Air Force regulations allow or do not allow with regard to air cargo. This was viewed as a possible baseline for change, although some regulations and instructions are grounded in law and are not flexible.

DoD 4515.13-R, Air Transportation Eligibility was reviewed for regulations pertaining to movement of non-Department of Defense cargo (in this case privately donated humanitarian assistance supplies) on a Department of Defense aircraft. As a general rule cargo operated on missions financed by Defense Business Operations Fund –

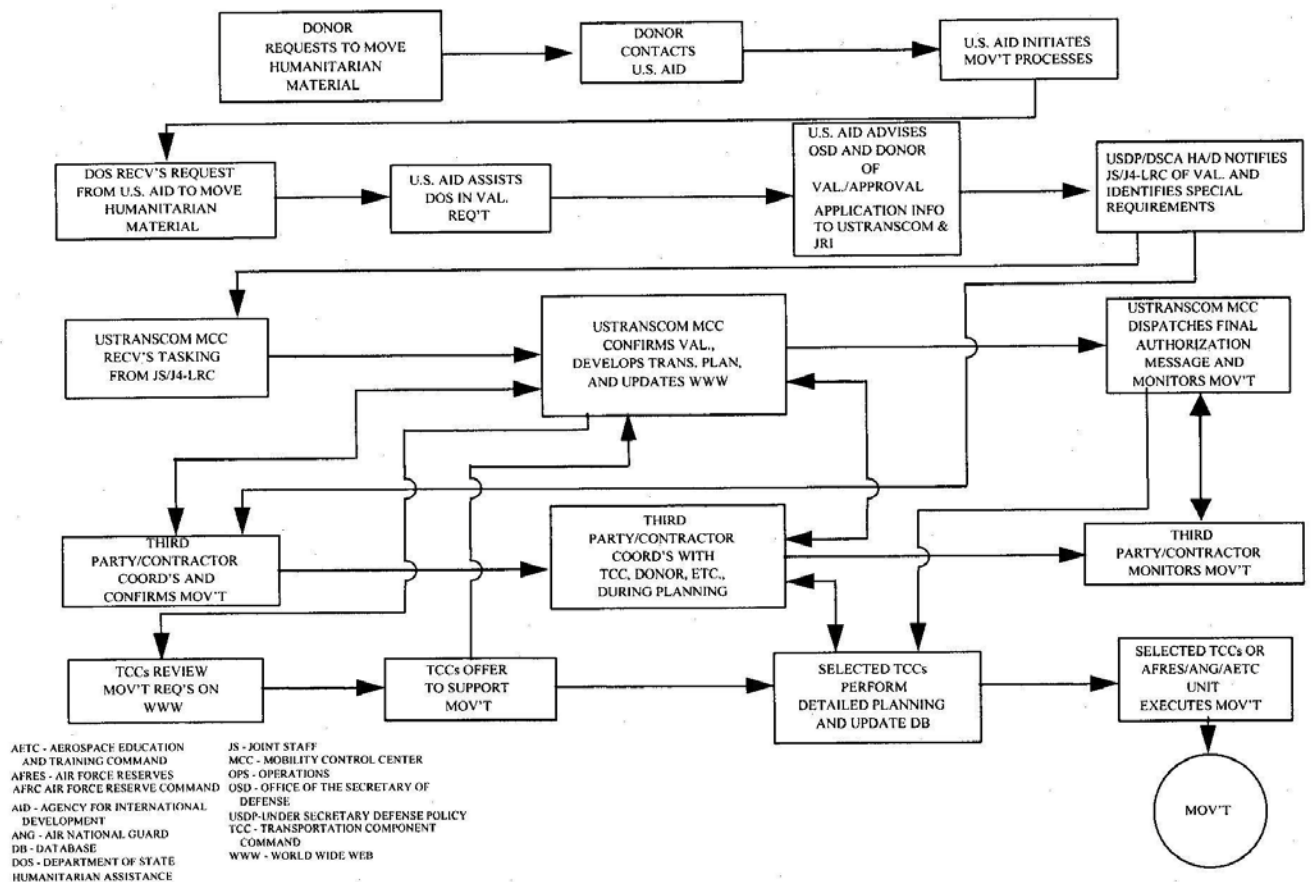
Transportation shall be on a reimbursable basis. The Defense Business Operations Fund – Transportation is the portion of the defense working capital fund that funds transportation activities. The philosophy behind the working capital funds and Defense Business Operations Fund – Transportation in particular is that the funding relies on sales revenue rather than direct Congressional appropriations to finance its operations. Therefore reimbursement is imperative for operations. In the case of humanitarian assistance material donated by private organizations, there is no mechanism for reimbursement. The publication later speaks more to non-Department of Defense cargo stating that it is eligible for movement on a military aircraft on a space required basis, however it must be approved by the Secretary of Defense. A daunting task when the objective is to react to a humanitarian assistance event in short order. DoD Directive 4500.09E, which covers transportation and traffic management, elaborates a little bit on this restriction by stating that Department of Defense transportation resources may be used to move non-military cargo only when the military mission is not impaired and the movement is of an emergency or lifesaving nature. And even then, Department of Defense transportation is somewhat of a last resort with commercial transportation being preferred. Again, in accordance with the Defense Business Operations Fund – Transportation, reimbursement is required. (Department of Defense, 2007:10) One exception, however, would be the Denton Process.

Finally the Defense Transportation Regulation, part III, appendix g, Movement of Humanitarian Assistance Supplies spells out the framework within which the Denton program must operate. All transportation of cargo must be consistent with the foreign policy of the United States, the supplies must be in usable condition, a valid need must

exist, and adequate arrangements must be in place in the destination country for distribution, among others. Most questions of this nature can arguably be answered by the combatant commander who has their finger on the pulse of their area of focus.

Determining the actual sequence of events that occur within the entire Denton process was fairly difficult from the available literature. One document that provided great insight, however, was one chapter (volume 2, chapter 8) of the standard operating procedure of the Joint Mobility Control Group, Mobility Control Center at United States Transportation Command. The copy referenced in this research is from June, 2002, however, as the research progressed its description of the process seemed to be accurate. In addition to a thorough description of the Denton Amendment process, the standard operating procedure provides an excellent diagram of the process that proved valuable in the interview portion of the research.





**Figure 1 Denton Amendment Cargo High Level Movement Process (U.S. Transportation Command, 2002:3)**

#### Section 4: The Denton Program

Published information on the Denton Program and its process is fairly limited, although the United States Agency for International Development website contains fairly good information. This information is targeted to the private organizations that are usually interested in using opportune military airlift. The agency makes it clear that, since cargo under this program is shipped opportune, it is impossible to predict when transportation will materialize and no guarantees can be made regarding completion of a shipment. Additionally, the web page ([http://www.usaid.gov/our\\_work/cross-](http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/cross-)

cutting\_programs/private\_voluntary\_cooperation/denton.html) walks prospective donors through the application and approval process.

Step	Description
1	Identify a consignee or local contact/recipient in the destination country for customs and distribution purposes
2	Collect all cargo and store in one location, prepare the commodities in compliance with U.S. military guidelines, and store or pay for commercial storage until U.S. military transportation becomes available.
3	Create a packing list in the format provided on the Denton website including weights, values and cubic feet of each box and individual item.
4	If sending medical equipment, supplies or pharmaceuticals read through the medical guidelines (also available on the website) to be sure cargo meets World Health Organization (WHO) standards. Send a copy of your packing list to a valid health organization in the destination country who will be using the supplies
5	Once all of the above documentation has been gathered, fill out an online application at <a href="http://www.dentonfunded.com">www.dentonfunded.com</a> and submit all supporting documentation to USAID/Washington. Applications will not be processed until all required documents have been submitted.

**Table 1 Denton Cargo Application Process**

This is not a quick process, particularly when shipping via airlift. The importance of steps 2 and 3 are obvious to professionals familiar with the issues involved in any movement by air transportation. Steps 1 and 4 are necessary to provide some order to shipments and ensure that the shipment is, indeed, wanted in the destination country. The United States government cannot simply gather donations and drop them at another country's doorstep.

In addition to the application process, the website also provides some detail regarding the process the agency follows in order to approve the acceptance of the donation. This essentially consists of communicating with the destination country to ensure the cargo will be accepted. It is made clear that this step can take some time depending on the responsiveness of the destination country.

Another excellent source for information on the Denton Program is public law itself.

Review of Title 10 of the United States Code, section 42, paragraph 402 details the Denton Amendment. Review of the actual law is always important, as misinterpretations can occur. However, in this case, it turns out that the actual legal language did not shed any more light on the process or restrictions than what was already found through the USAID website and military doctrine and regulations.

### **Section 5: Humanitarian Aid Case**

The final part of the literature review involves facts related to the chosen case of private voluntary organization donation. On 26 August, 2008, Hurricane Gustav made landfall on the southwest peninsula of Haiti. The hurricane then continued inland bringing heavy rain which triggered flooding and landslides. The hurricane was reportedly responsible for 77 deaths in Haiti and vast property damage, although monetary damage figures are not available. (Beven and Kimberlain 2009:4)

Hurricane Gustav was, in fact, the second of four hurricanes to hit Haiti last August and September. Hurricanes Fay, Gustav, Hanna and Ike devastated the island one right after another. It is extremely difficult, therefore, to separate the impacts of the individual storms by just looking at media reports and reports from various relief agencies. Because of this, it is likely that the true death toll will probably never be known. (Beven and Kimberlain 2009:4)

In late September 2008 the office of the governor of New York released information regarding an effort to collect donations for Haiti. According to the press release, hundreds of New Yorkers had donated supplies for Haiti and the governor was encouraging donations at three National Guard armories in New York City. (Office of the Governor of New York 2008) This seems to be consistent with the fact that New York has a significant Haitian

population, and often ethnic communities within the United States want to support their communities in their native countries. The Haitian population in New York was estimated to be 180,000 in 2001 by the U.S. Census Bureau. (Elliot 2001)

This scenario is a good case to use for this case study research as it provides an example of an opportunity to use private donations quickly in response to a humanitarian assistance event in the U.S. Southern Command area of focus.

### **III. Methodology**

This study will utilize the case study methodology as outlined by Yin (2003) to evaluate the research questions and hypotheses stated above. An individual instance of a humanitarian assistance donation will be examined along with the research questions to gain a complete understanding of the Denton Cargo Process and the interaction between the United States Agency for International Development and the Department of Defense (in this case U.S. Southern Command). By examining this case, the objective is to identify not only how responsive the process is from a Combatant Commander perspective, but also what changes could be made to the process to make it more effective for U.S. Southern Command. Additionally the research, using this case as background, will examine what differences exist, if any, in organizational priorities and organizational processes that contribute to or detract from the responsiveness of this program. Therefore the unit of analysis will be a private donation of humanitarian aid intended for a country in the U.S. Southern Command area of focus whereby the donors desire to use Department of Defense transportation under the Denton Program.

Data, in this case, was gathered through interviews with subject matter experts. With regard to this research, the subject matter experts are limited in number to a few people that are directly involved in the Denton Cargo Process. Those interviewed represent U.S. Agency for International Development, U.S. Transportation Command, U.S. Southern Command, and the Defense Security Cooperation Agency. All are involved in processing Denton requests and managing the cargo up to final loading on Air Force Air Mobility Command aircraft. It is readily acknowledged that a survey of a larger group of

people would present better data. However the scope of the program is fairly limited and a larger survey is not practical.

The data collected through the interviews will be analyzed for any concurrence among the subject matter experts regarding changes that may be made to the process in order to make it more responsive to humanitarian assistance events.

Each interview consisted of a set of 10 standard questions. The questions did not vary among the interview subjects. However, given that interviews are essentially guided conversations, it was expected that the subject matter experts would occasionally volunteer valuable information and insight not contained within the standard questions. The structure and relatively free flow of the interviews differentiates it from a more formal method like a survey. This provides some advantages in that ideas or facts that are outside the scope of the original hypothesis are encouraged and can lead to unexpected conclusions. The less structured format of an interview allows for the ideas and points to surface that are not preplanned by the researcher. The questions are designed to discern the facts about the subject as well as to solicit the subject matter experts' opinions regarding the process and certain events.

The primary challenge, as with all interviews, is for the researcher to approach each subject matter expert in as unbiased a manner as possible. Using words, or even a tone of voice, that may put the subject on the defensive or perhaps bias their response is a danger and is guarded against. This is particularly an issue considering that the researcher is a member of the Department of Defense and some interview subjects are not. Extra effort was made in introductory statements and in the structure of questions to avoid presenting any bias toward a Department of Defense point of view. It was expected that on some

level, those outside of the Department of Defense will have a different point of view, different motivations or a fundamentally different understanding of the purpose and proper execution of the Denton Amendment.

As more information and opinion is collected regarding the Denton Process, it is expected that a second round of interviews may be necessary to verify facts and engage the subject matter experts on their opinions on newly discovered information. In the final analysis, the case study should give insight into a particular process, the Denton Process. The research is not intended to be a comprehensive study of humanitarian assistance methods.

## **Research Design**

*A research design is a logical plan for getting from here to there, where here is defined as the initial set of questions to be answered, and there is some set of conclusions (answers) about these questions (Yin, 2003:20).*

The research design for this project is simply defined as a way to connect the empirical data to the initial research questions and ultimately the conclusion. Areas considered in the design are what questions to study, what data are relevant, what data should be collected, and how the results will be analyzed.

The first question approached was simply how the Denton Process works. What was known from the beginning was that it is a process that crosses more than one government agency. This was expected to present unique challenges with regard to any type of official documentation that may belong to another agency (for example regulations or instructions). Next the research design led to the question of who is involved in the process from beginning to end. Following that, one can begin to investigate through

interviews with those people, uncover why the process may or may not be responsive to combatant commander requirements and how the process could be improved.

The data for process investigation was expected to consist of documentation of the process, identification of where potential bottlenecks may lie, and opinions of subject matter experts as to where processes may be improved or where seams may be closed between the organizations involved. A primary focus of interviews was to explore where the interactions exist between the organizations that could create problems.

The initial research proposition was that the Denton Process is not responsive because of differences of organizational priority and resources and possible incompatibilities between the processes of the Agency for International Development and U.S. Southern Command, or the Department of Defense in general.

The unit of analysis for the case study method is a single case of delivery of humanitarian assistance to Haiti in the fall of 2008. The rationale for choosing only a single case is that this event came up early in the research and presented qualities that could make it the one critical test of the hypothesis (Yin, 2008: 41). This case is intended to show why it is not the people involved in the process but the processes themselves that are broken.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

Yin (2003) states that in using a case study methodology, evidence may come from six distinct sources: documents, archival records, interviews, direct observation, participant-observation and physical artifacts. This study is limited to documents and interviews based on the nature of the research question and practical, or resource, restrictions with



regard to using observation as a source. For example, during a program of study it is not feasible for a student to travel and participate in direct observation.

Documents are elaborated on to a large extent in the literature review. Because the literature available on the Denton Program is limited, documents describing the purpose of the program and how it is executed were essential to gaining an understanding of how the program is designed to work and where it fits in with the overall national security framework. However in some cases letters or memorandums were used as evidence of particular actions taken or as clarification of the intent of leadership with regard to use of the Denton Program. It is acknowledged that one cannot always look to documents, particularly memorandums or letters, as fact. Often there is bias in the written word as well as outright omission of or editing of fact. The documents were viewed as a source of possible corroboration or augmentation of evidence from other sources, in this case the interviews. One limitation with regard to collecting relevant documents was that the interviews were conducted via phone or email. Face to face meetings and direct observation would have facilitated the collection of documents “on the spot.”

The essential source of information for this research was the interviews. These took the form of a focused interview following a certain set of questions derived from the case study protocol. However, the interviews remained open-ended and were conducted primarily in a conversational manner to encourage honesty and openness by the subjects.

Interviews were conducted with as many people as possible who are directly involved in the Denton Process either now or, in one case, in the past. There were two methods used to identify people for interviews. The first was a simple study of all elements of the process followed up by phone calls to each organization involved. This was coupled with

requests from interview subjects for additional interviewees involved in the Denton Process, or even unsolicited referrals. It is likely that these methods did not turn up all interview subjects who could be of value to the research. However, there is confidence that the quantity and quality of the interview subjects who were utilized is sufficient. The interview responses were categorized by subject area and opinions within each area were compared, facilitating an analysis of similarities or differences. Conclusions were thus drawn regarding the investigative questions.

## **IV. Findings**

### **Overview**

The research consisted of interviews with seven experts in the Denton Process from the United States Agency for International Development, the Defense Security Cooperation Agency, U.S. Transportation Command, U.S. Southern Command, and a former Tanker Airlift Control Element commander who had experience with Denton cargo. With the exception of the last interview subject, they are all currently involved in the process and, in some cases have extensive, multi-year experience with the program.

There were a few challenges with the interview process that were relevant to the research. Time available and difficulty in reaching busy interview subjects via telephone precluded an opportunity to analyze responses and conduct subsequent rounds of interviews. This constrained the research to what is considered only preliminary results. Also, telephone interviews present a specific communication challenge. In the context of a telephone interview, the researcher is unable to put responses into context with non-verbal communication. Non-verbal communication (facial expressions, etc.) can aid in judging strength of responses, feelings, etc.

### **Execution**

The analysis of the execution of the Denton Program began with a comparison of the language in the law, Title 10 of the United States Code, section 42, paragraph 402 (the Denton Amendment) to the process being employed to implement the law. Many times laws passed by congress contain rather broad language with some latitude for execution

by the appropriate executive agency. In this case the language was specific enough that there is did not appear to be much latitude.

The procedures for execution of the movement of privately donated humanitarian assistance via Department of Defense aircraft were obtained from three sources: a memorandum of understanding between the Departments of State and Defense and the U.S. Agency for International Development signed in 1995, the standard operating procedure of the Joint Mobility Control Group, Mobility Control Center at United States Transportation Command, dated 2002, and the U.S. Agency for International Development website. The goal in drawing a comparison between the law and the executive agency procedures used to carry out the law was to exploit any opportunities to modify these same procedures while still meeting the intent of the law. This did not reveal any practical solutions or opportunities. Two elements of the process were identified that were not specifically articulated as requirements in the language of the Denton Amendment. The first was the requirement that the donors arrange for and pay for transportation of the donated items to the aerial port of debarkation. While the government, in this case the Department of Defense, certainly could take on this task and thus make the process more responsive and effective, this would demand more resources (both people and money) be provided by the Department of Defense. This did not seem realistic given the department's fiscal situation now and in the foreseeable future. The second opportunity was the requirement that the donors arrange for appropriate in-country distribution of the items. While the Department of State or the U.S. Agency for International Development could feasibly take on this function, it seemed unrealistic for the same reasons as the first opportunity.

The research next examined the application process. This process is currently handled entirely by the Agency for International Development. However, it should be noted that significant elements of the application process will be handled by the Defense Security Cooperation Agency in the future. At the moment, the application approval process takes approximately four to six weeks. This can be frustrating for well meaning donors; however, in discussion of the details of the process with the Agency for International Development it was clear that much of the time actually is dependent on the donor. Attention to detail in the application and general misunderstanding of the program can lead to application delays. Another challenge the agency must contend with is verification of the appropriateness of the donation. This takes time and is necessary due to the fact that the U.S. Government must be sensitive to the “cultural appropriateness” of the donation and compatibility with the foreign policy of the U.S. and that it, indeed, meets a real need in the destination country.

Once the application is approved and the donor has arranged for transportation to the aerial port of debarkation, a U.S. Transportation Command contractor, Joint Relief International, matches the cargo with airlift. U.S. Transportation Command personnel stated that at this point their role in the process is relatively minor and consists mainly of receiving the tasking and tracking it.

It is important to note that U.S. Southern Command is not ostensibly involved in the process. They are very interested users of the process, however. The research revealed that their interest in the process is high and is directly relevant to their efforts to influence the western hemisphere positively for national security.

Another important footnote to this process is the political aspect. Interview subjects from two different organizations referenced direct political pressure from a senator and a governor involved in the donations collected for the disasters in Haiti. Obviously, this is significant to the process. This tends to confirm that even some of our highest level leaders may not understand the limitations of the program. This situation produces a stressful conflict amongst political leaders and those charged with executing the Denton Program.

Finally, there is frustration among some charged with executing the program. The procedures in place to prevent inappropriate donations exist because, in general, the public, while certainly generous and well meaning, does not have the knowledge of foreign policy issues that could assist in determining what constitutes a good donation for a specific country or a specific situation. Three interview subjects from three different organizations stated that, in the end, simple monetary donations would be better as the government could purchase and deliver situation-specific humanitarian assistance. There is, in fact, an impressive effort by the Center for International Disaster Information under a grant from the U.S. Agency for International Development to address this. The center's website states that "the Center uses its information management resources to implement various targeted public awareness activities to address the issues of appropriate donations and volunteer practice in order to reduce the burden they cause for relief organizations, host governments and disaster victims and lessen the frustration experienced by the public donor community" ([www.cidi.org](http://www.cidi.org)). The challenge here is one of education. Those interviewed that have experience dealing directly with private donors expressed

that the donors do not want to donate money as there is generally suspicion that monetary donations may not be used efficiently by the government.

### **Sources of Ineffectiveness**

The first potential source of ineffectiveness was what could be interpreted as institutional differences of focus. It was clear that sometimes within the Department of Defense, there is a desire to use the Denton Program for what might be called “press moments.” Perhaps this is due to the culture within the department that often demands quick action and relatively quick results. An example that presented itself two times in the interviews was the importance of having a U.S. military aircraft on the scene while a humanitarian assistance event is still new enough that the television cameras are also still on the scene. Quick reaction to an event with an American airplane on the scene can contribute to U.S. soft power, or promotion of positive images of the United States that ultimately can increase our status throughout the world.

The U.S. Agency for International Aid interviewees certainly understood the value of soft power. However, due to the nature of their mission and their particular focus, they are much less interested in “press moments.” They view humanitarian assistance events through a long-term lens. Populations in need are in need long after the television cameras leave.

These differing views of a crisis could result in lower-level interagency conflict. However, the reality is that both points of view are correct. The representatives from U.S. Southern Command certainly fully appreciated this reality and were, in fact, working on mutually beneficial solutions while this research was being conducted.

As the research progressed, it became more and more clear that the largest barrier to whether or not the Denton Program could be more responsive to U.S. Southern Command requirements was the fact that the program, by its nature involving validation of whether or not the donation is appropriate, is not designed for quick response. During interviews with both the Agency for International Development interview subjects and several Department of Defense interview subjects several other government programs surfaced that were more suited to quick response. In a large sense the Denton Program is wrapped up in the law that created it and is not flexible. U.S. Southern Command realizes this and is developing creative solutions to use the Denton Program in a less than quick response manner. And, in fact, the Denton Program was ultimately not used in the response to the disaster in Haiti in 2008.

Finally, one point of view presented itself four times in the interviews and should be mentioned. There exists a large misunderstanding of the program in general. This can result in various Department of Defense officials and private voluntary organizations attempting to use the Denton Program for something for which it was not intended. The entire case study of events that occurred in Haiti in 2008 provided an example. There were many people both of Haitian decent and the general population that donated material with the intention of helping the population of Haiti. There was a significant effort, along with some political pressure, to use the Denton Program to move the donations to Haiti. This could not be done quickly due to the restrictions inherent in the program (by law). This can cause tremendous frustration by donors who are presented with the choice of not sending the material, using another, slower program, or funding private transportation (usually not an option). One source of this problem could be the



natural focus on the fact that the Denton Program provides free transportation along with the tendency to not dig into the other, finer restrictions.

### **Increase in Responsiveness/Effectiveness**

While the Denton Program is not designed for fast response to humanitarian assistance events, there are some areas for improvement that were evident from analysis of interview responses.

Better communication as a potential source of increased effectiveness presented itself several times; more specifically, communication of goals and current effort among the different agencies involved in the process. In discussions with the Agency for International Development it was apparent that key people in the process were unaware of what was causing an increase in U.S. Southern Command's interest in the Denton Program and a subsequent increase in donations for the U.S. Southern Command area of focus. The answer lies in the interview with U.S. Southern Command personnel who explained that the command had come to see the Denton Program as a valuable part of the effort to influence the region and that the command had also began an outreach to private voluntary organizations to promote the Denton Program. This is positive, but reveals that even with interagency cooperation as good as it is in U.S. Southern Command, communication of goals and objectives sometimes does not occur at the lowest level, thus leading to lost opportunity to work together more closely and capitalize on mutual expertise.

Another example of lack of communication was revealed in discussions among the agencies regarding the matching of donations to transportation. The Agency for

International Development in some cases is more aware of where the private donors are and what their future plans might be. An interview subject from the agency expressed some frustration at not having knowledge of aircraft that are scheduled to fly into South America. With this knowledge and some coordination the two agencies could potentially better match donor with transportation. At the same time, a Department of Defense interviewee mentioned that there is very often extra capacity on flights to the U.S. Southern Command Area of Focus.

Interestingly, the various people interviewed for this research from different agencies often knew each other. However, the fact is that none are focused solely on the Denton Program and with heavy workloads don't have the ideal opportunities to talk frequently. Communication is a difficult issue under the best of circumstances and solutions are rarely simple. Institutionalization of face-to-face meetings/conferences and/or electronic communication is a possible solution.

More personnel or even an increased focus by existing personnel could also speed up the process. This is difficult in a constrained fiscal environment; however steps are already being taken in this direction. During the research, plans were already being implemented to move much of the application process to the Defense Security Cooperation Agency under the Department of Defense. One person will be focused entirely on Denton Program applications. Currently the Agency for International Development is only able to give one person to that part of the process and that person is not focused solely on the Denton Program. So, in effect man hours devoted to this part of the process may double.

A final opportunity to improve the process in certain situations would be waivers for U.S. Southern Command, or standing Execute Orders, essentially a specified plan for future occurrences of humanitarian assistance events in the U.S. Southern Command area of focus. In response to the Haitian situation in 2008, U.S. Southern Command requested exactly that. The result was temporary authority to use appropriations of money not normally accessible the command in order to purchase humanitarian relief supplies as well as temporary authority to approve transportation of non-Department of Defense donated relief supplies, in effect becoming the Denton Program authorizer for a short period of time. While still having to adhere to the requirements set forth in the Denton Amendment, this does speed up the process.

One specific question to all the interview subjects regarded each of their opinion on ways to speed up the process. Several made mention of the efforts to change the application process or the development of the standing Execute Order. However none presented additional methods to shorten the process.

## **V. Conclusion and Areas for Further Study**

### **Conclusion**

This research focused on the hypothesis, or problem statement, that the Denton Program, as it is executed, is not responsive enough to meet the needs of U.S. Southern Command. The research examined four central questions regarding how the program is currently executed, who is involved, what, if any, barriers exist to better execution, and how the program could be more responsive to humanitarian aid requirements in U.S. Southern Command.

A review of the literature makes it clear that the different methods of humanitarian assistance are important to national security as outlined in the president's national security strategy. Additionally, an examination of both Department of Defense and Department of State strategy doctrine documents revealed that all agencies involved with the Denton Program have placed appropriate emphasis on humanitarian assistance. All agencies are "working off the same page."

By using the case study methodology and personal interviews with those people directly involved in the Denton Process both now and in the past, the research revealed that the original problem statement was working toward the wrong question. Because so much of the execution of the Denton Program is tied to the language of federal law, the Denton Program was never designed to be a quick response tool. The magnitude of the necessary validations in order to avoid an inappropriate donation that may be inconsistent with U.S. foreign policy, culturally inappropriate, may not have a distribution organization in a particular country, or that is not airworthy, is tremendous. These are all valid issues that must be settled with regard to any donation by a private organization.

The analysis of current execution and the barriers to responsiveness led to the conclusion that the better research question may be “how can the Denton Program be made more efficient and/or effective?”

The interviews with the Denton Program subject matter experts chosen for this research identified three possible opportunities. The first is a Department of Defense waiver or standing execution order for U.S. Southern Command allowing for the command to take over some of the validation process under certain circumstances. This has been done in the past and several of the interview subjects mentioned that a standing execution order is being drawn up now. Another good opportunity for improvement is to realign resources and various steps of the approval and validation process. This is also being accomplished with much of the approval process moving to the Defense Security Cooperation Agency allowing for more manpower and focus on this part of the process. This should speed up the process. Finally, there may be opportunities to improve communication among the various agencies. This is, by far, the most difficult to accomplish. The alignment of not only higher level strategy, but also strategies at lower levels of the relevant agencies with actual day-to-day operations could present opportunities to make the Denton Process more efficient and effective.

Much has been written and researched regarding the challenges of interagency interaction at the strategic level. This research revealed that challenges also exist at the lowest level. Of course, this is intuitive for anyone who has been involved with coordination among large organizations. However, with increased emphasis on these same interagency interactions in response to a new threat to national security, these

shortfalls demand the same kind of attention that the Department of Defense received in 1986 with the Goldwater-Nichols Act.

Doctrine changes within the military in the 1970s and 1980s attempting to synthesize the capabilities of the different branches of the military exposed the difficulty of coordinating efforts among the branches. The Goldwater-Nichols Act brought sweeping changes to the organization of the military at the higher levels, the interaction of the services, and the personnel policies that govern officers' careers. All this has arguably has caused even lower levels to think and act more jointly over the years since the law was enacted. This same kind of effort is needed at the interagency level. The Joint Interagency Coordination Group at the combatant commands is a good start.

### **Areas for Further Study**

The research also exposed several potential areas for further study.

With regard to the Denton Program there are currently some barriers, both legal and resource, that prevent the military from quick execution of humanitarian assistance efforts in every humanitarian assistance event. These are limited personnel to handle the administrative aspects of a program, fiscal resources to handle all modes of transportation for donations (i.e. ground, air, etc.) vice having the private donor absorb those costs, and the requirement to use only opportune airlift vice dedicating a mission to humanitarian assistance delivery. An analysis of these costs would provide some insight into whether or not it may be better for national security for the military to do it all.

Another area may be the process itself. The Denton Process is mainly a sequential process of approval and validation, inspection, and movement. Research might be

conducted into the feasibility of concurrent processing much like is done within the subject of business process improvement.

A third area that came up a several times during the research was the opinion that money as a donation was more effective than donations by private organizations. This opinion is held because donations of money allow for government purchase of situation-specific humanitarian aid and eliminates the possibility of the various problems a private donation can bring (not culturally appropriate, not useful for the specific situation, not packaged properly, no NGO in the target country for distribution, etc.). However monetary donations also present the government with organizational costs (acquisition, storage, movement, etc.). An analysis of the two methods of humanitarian assistance donations would aid in decision making.

Finally, it was acknowledged several times in the research that U.S. Southern Command has aircraft flying into their area of focus on various missions that are not fully loaded. There is opportunity to send humanitarian assistance that is not being taken advantage of. An analysis of how much opportune airlift exists and which destinations the opportune lift is flying to can be compared to the existing humanitarian assistance priorities of U.S. Southern Command to reveal if there are the airlift system could be used more effectively.

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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE				Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188	
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1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY) 06-19-2009		2. REPORT TYPE Graduate Research Project		3. DATES COVERED (From - To) May 2008 – June 2009	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE  DENTON CARGO: AN ANALYSIS OF INTERAGENCY INTERACTION				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
				5b. GRANT NUMBER	
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S)  Lux, Barton S., Major, USAF				5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
				5e. TASK NUMBER	
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)  Air Force Institute of Technology Graduate School of Engineering and Management (AFIT/ENS) 2950 P Street, Building 640 WPAFB OH 45433-7765				8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER  AFIT/IMO/ENS/08-10	
9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) HQ USSOUTHCOM MIAMI, FL DSN 567-3662				10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S) USTRANSCOM/LNO to SOUTHCOM	
				11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT APPROVED FOR PUBLIC RELEASE;					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT The purpose of this research was to examine the process for approving/validating and moving privately donated humanitarian aid via the Denton Program for only that cargo destined for the SOUTHCOM area of focus. The research set out to look at, more specifically, whether or not the Denton process is could be made more responsive to humanitarian disaster events in the SOUTHCOM Area of Focus by changing organizational differences and/or priorities within the U.S. Agency for International Development and U.S. Southern Command.					
15. SUBJECT TERMS Denton Program, Interagency, SOUTHCOM, USAID					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:					
a. REPORT U			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT UU	18. NUMBER OF PAGES 49	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON Cunningham, William, PhD.
	b. ABSTRACT U	c. THIS PAGE U			19b. TELEPHONE NUMBER (include area code) (937)255-6565 X4283

